

## Tilburg University

### Language testing for immigration and citizenship in The Netherlands

Spotti, M.

*Published in:*

The companion to language assessment

*DOI:*

[10.1002/9781118411360](https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118411360)

*Publication date:*

2013

*Document Version*

Early version, also known as pre-print

[Link to publication in Tilburg University Research Portal](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*

Spotti, M. (2013). Language testing for immigration and citizenship in The Netherlands. In A. J. Kunnan (Ed.), *The companion to language assessment* (pp. 390-403). Wiley-Blackwell. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118411360>

#### General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal

#### Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

# Language Testing for Immigration and Citizenship in the Netherlands

Massimiliano Spotti  
*Tilburg University, Netherlands*

## Introduction

Anyone even slightly familiar with the Dutch situation can hardly fail to notice the degree to which the Dutch political discourse has channeled the attention of its indigenous inhabitants around concepts of nation, national language, and national loyalty since the beginning of the 21st century. Considering the most recent developments that have taken place in Dutch political discourse, one can hardly miss either how the concept of nation is being presented to the people as a homogeneous entity, with one language serving the role of (official) national language and one of its varieties—the standard one—generally being presented as neutral vis-à-vis all the others. As a result of such a policy, the (official) national language becomes a powerful tool of group belonging and its mastery comes to be considered pivotal to maintaining national order (Bauman & Briggs, 2003). Consequently, a fundamental difference between the people who fall within the nation, language, and territory equation and those falling outside it is that the former are legally recognized members of an “imagined community” of people (Anderson, 1991). These people—whether they know each other or not—all share a common identity, namely that of being fellow nationals through a wide range of semiotic resources, such as a national flag, a national anthem, a liberation day, a national football team. When engaged in questions of migration and citizenship, indigenous inhabitants base themselves on ideologies of language and belonging. These ideologies are generally shared attitudes and beliefs that work as the binding cement of the nation. They pave the way for a connection between citizenship and mastery of the majority language as a prerequisite for positive social participation and crucial for maintaining national order. Ideologies are propagated through discourses, which in turn are authored and authorized by “real” macro-historical actors, such as governments, ministries, and political parties, their electoral

programs and their representatives. It is because of their historical rootedness that ideologies are not very likely to cause cognitive dissonance, being sold as they often are as “commonsensical” thinking or, to borrow a term from Bourdieu (1991), as *doxas*. The ideology inherent in testing would-be immigrants’ proficiency in the national language is one that presents the acquisition of *the* national language and the acquisition of *the* mainstream cultural norms and values for immigrants (newly arrived ones as well as legally recognized long term residents) as commonsensical, testing being an objective way of providing tangible proof of the immigrant’s progress on a continuum that goes from “being a foreigner” to “being an integrated citizen.” As a result of this, test results carry a heavy indexical load. This is so not only in terms of categories of inclusion and exclusion (i.e., who takes the test versus who does not), but also in terms of the values attached to such categories and their contribution, or lack thereof, to mainstream society (McNamara & Shohamy, 2008; Spotti, 2011a).

Another important element to be taken up here is what exactly the testing industry understands by language and culture. Often, if not always, this comes down to a modernist conceptualization whereby language and culture are looked upon as a whole gamut of skills that someone has at their disposal precisely because he or she was born, raised, and schooled in a specific nation. Naturally, immigrants who enter a nation, and in the case of the Netherlands also those immigrants who already are legally recognized long term residents, need to be put in a position where they can acquire these skills. “Correct” mastery of these skills carries positive consequences. Thus, for instance, immigrants who have managed to master cultural norms and values and are willing and able to put them into practice—an example might be an imam who shakes hands with a female minister of integration—are looked upon as being a “good” citizen, adhering as they are to the cultural practices of the receiving society. Similarly, immigrants who have learned to speak the majority language well are often praised by native inhabitants for being good language users through (informal) compliments like: “Well, you speak good Dutch for a foreigner.” The people in question, in fact, have managed to learn the official national language, most likely in one of its regional varieties, with a certain degree of appropriateness and thus are worthy of praise because it shows a form of civic integration into the mainstream, which in turn constitutes a contribution to the maintenance of national order. The testing industry takes this modernist understanding of language and culture a step further by adding a subtle yet remarkable twist. In seeing language and culture as stable denotational entities, the testing industry embraces an understanding of language and culture as skills that can be marketed, that can be bought and sold, and most important of all that can be measured. The upshot of it is that in the case of poor results, if someone fails the test and hence lacks—or at least fails to demonstrate—the ability to positively integrate into mainstream society, economic and residential sanctions become justifiable measures.

It is against this background that the present chapter sets out to illustrate the ideologies inherent in the testing for (a) admission and (b) integration of immigrants in the Netherlands. Rather than exploring these through the direct experience of the immigrant (Block, 2006), it takes the perspective of the nation-state’s testing machinery and focuses on a period that can roughly be indicated as

between March 2006 and January 2007 given that this period is key to a series of shifts within the political discourse surrounding civic integration of immigrants and the language-testing industry.

The texts referred to in this chapter are small samples taken from a large collection of official publications including policy documents, government reports, declarations issued by ancillary agencies—both governmental and private—asked to advise the government, as well as press conference declarations, released parliamentary interventions, and public interviews. It is on the basis of these documents that the chapter offers an insight into the testing regime for integration and its discourse, the implications for immigrants coming to and residing in the Netherlands and how this regime mirrors the polarization that has taken place in Dutch society.

## Conceptualization

The current Dutch political discourse on immigrant minorities abounds with terms used to describe the identities of immigrant minority group members. As the first of many we encounter the term *allochtoon*. The concept, officially introduced in 1989 by the Scientific Council for Government Policies (WRR, 1989), was originally used to refer to a person born abroad or having at least one parent born abroad. The intention of the WRR in introducing the term *allochtoon* was to abandon a group-oriented approach to immigrant minority groups and to focus on individuals. Over the years, however, this term has acquired all kinds of negative connotations, becoming associated primarily with the absence of and need for linguistic integration and the lack of positive social participation in mainstream society. More recently, a further hierarchization has been added to the Dutch minority jargon with the introduction of the terms *westerse allochtonen* (Western immigrant minorities) and *niet-westerse allochtonen* (non-Western immigrant minorities). The former refers to EU citizens as well as those immigrants coming from English-speaking countries mostly, although it includes also Indonesians and Japanese. In the political discourse, members of this category are scarcely mentioned as constituting a threat to social cohesion, although Poles, Bulgarians, and Romanians are often singled out as posing a potential threat to the native manual labor workforce. The latter term, by contrast, includes mostly members of the Turkish, Moroccan, and Somali communities as well as new arrivals from other countries (Van den Tillart et al., 2000), who are presented as people in need of societal and linguistic integration. All of the above are identity ascription terms currently used in political and public discourse by native Dutch people to contrast with self-reference terms such as *autochtonen* (indigenous group members) and *Nederlanders* (Dutch people).

The array of terms used to refer to minorities pales into insignificance when compared with the armor of terms developed by the Dutch testing industry, particularly in recent years. First, there is the term *toelatingstest* (admission test), which is a test that takes place in the immigrant's own country of origin and which serves the purpose of making him or her eligible for admission to the Netherlands. Second, we have the term *inburgering* (civic integration) (De Heer, 2004). This term,

which first appeared in the *Wet Inburgering Nieuwkomers* (Law on the Integration of Newcomers) (WIN, 1998), deals with the need for societal and linguistic integration of *nieuwkomers* (newcomers), that is newly arrived immigrants on Dutch soil who are not qualified as refugees or asylum seekers. This need for integration also applies to *oudkomers* (oldcomers), generally low-educated immigrants who are long term residents in the Netherlands and who, in the vast majority of cases, already hold a residence permit.

In the following section, the reader is presented with a brief history of the laws and regulations for integration in the Netherlands. First, however, as frequent reference will be made to the measuring of language proficiency in Dutch following the terms spelled out by the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), it is necessary to briefly discuss the structure of the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001), its original purpose, as well as the use that the Dutch government has made of this instrument within the framework of testing for integration (refer to Extra, Spotti, & Van Avermaet, 2009, for a comprehensive discussion of the use of the CEFR across Europe).

## **The Common European Framework of Reference**

In many nation-states across Europe, one of the key features of the integration policy is the official national language. For the Netherlands, knowledge of the Dutch language is key to admission and integration and is a prerequisite for the applicant to be awarded a permanent residence permit or be granted naturalization. In order to flesh out and to implement this policy of linguistic homogenization, the CEFR was used to mark the level of language knowledge and proficiency to be attained by prospective immigrants. The CEFR, which has come to be a structural pillar of the (Dutch) regime of language testing for integration, defines levels of language knowledge and proficiency that allow us to measure the progress made by immigrants in the course of their integration track. The main objective of the CEFR is to offer a frame of reference, a metalanguage, as it were. It serves to promote and facilitate cooperation among educational institutions in different countries. It aims to provide a transnational basis for the mutual recognition of language qualifications. A further aim is to assist learners, teachers, course designers, examining bodies, and educational administrators to coordinate their efforts. And a final aim is to create transparency in helping partners in language teaching and learning to describe the levels of proficiency required by existing standards and examinations in order to facilitate comparisons between different qualification systems. It is important to emphasize that the CEFR was never intended to serve as a prescriptive model or a fixed set or book of language aims. Rather, it has a quantitative and a qualitative dimension. The former dimension covers learning development in domains (school, home, work), functions (ask, command, inquire), notions (south, table, father), situations (meeting, telephone), locations (school, market), topics (study, holidays, work), and roles (listener in audience, participant in a discussion). The qualitative dimension expresses the degree of effectiveness (precision) and efficiency (leading to communication) of language learning. A set of six levels and sublevels (A1, A2,

B1, B2, C1, C2) has been distinguished for use as common standards that should help course providers to relate their products such as coursebooks, teaching courses, and assessment instruments to a common reference system.

As mentioned before, the cornerstone of integration policies in most European countries is the official national language. For the Netherlands, knowledge is the main condition for those who want to apply for admission, be granted residence, and be awarded citizenship. To realize this monolingual policy, test makers in the Netherlands use the CEFR as a marker of the level immigrants ought to attain. This is problematic when the CEFR is used for admission, integration, and citizenship tests where a large part of the target group either has low literacy skills or is functionally illiterate. When we look at the CEFR from the L2 user's perspective, however, there is a severe lack of evidence that shows that all L2 learners of a given language at a given level (other than the lowest level A1) are able to perform all tasks associated with lower level descriptors. For the Netherlands, knowledge of both the Dutch language and Dutch society are the most important preconditions for those who aspire to being admitted to the Netherlands in the first place and for those who wish to qualify for a residence permit and later on for citizenship. In fleshing out this monolingual approach to language policy, the agencies involved in the making of the admission, integration, and citizenship tests—although, as we will see, the latter was incorporated in the integration test after June 2006—have used the CEFR as a reference point. The use of the CEFR thus turns out to be quite problematic for two reasons. First, the CEFR is used for the admission and integration examination even when a vast majority of the people being asked to take these tests have low literacy levels or are illiterate (Kurvers & Stockmann, 2009). Second, the level descriptors of the CEFR are mainly aimed at measuring the language knowledge of highly educated people. Lower- and semi-skilled people who have no background in higher education or do not study at a higher level do not fall within the categories described in the CEFR, as a result of which, backed up by the national authorities, recourse is being taken to introduce new CEFR levels (e.g., A1–) for use in the admission test. The role played by the CEFR in the Dutch testing machinery becomes even more problematic when one looks at the consequences involved in not coming up to the minimum level required. If they fail to attain the level required, people are refused citizenship, residence, or even admission. Summarizing, it is important to emphasize that the proficiency levels employed as a measure for testing immigrants were never intended to be used for that purpose.

### **The Moralization of Citizenship Through the Use of Language Testing**

The legislative pillars of the Dutch testing regime for newly arrived migrants have been built on since 1998. Before 1998, there was but one government document (RRIN, 1996) that pointed to the obligation of newcomers to learn Dutch. The law that was approved in 1998 prescribed that newcomers—from the moment of their arrival in the Netherlands—were obliged to attend courses of Dutch as a second language and understanding Dutch society with a particular focus on work

situations. They were also advised to take part in the final examinations of these courses, so that they could show the certificate as proof that they had actually taken these courses. Although these courses were in place, there was no specification of the level of language proficiency to be achieved, as the law proposed only one level newcomers should strive to attain—more specifically level 3, which is comparable to level B1 of the CEFR. This situation changed dramatically in 2003 with the General Government Accord (*Hoofddijnenakkoord*, 2003) and even more in 2004 with the introduction of the government resolution on the Revision of Civic Integration Regulations (Verdonk, 2004a). In comparison with the law approved in 1998, there are a series of fundamental changes that show the Dutch government's new approach toward integration of newly arrived migrants. These changes are:

- the use of an admission test that has to be taken (and passed) before newcomers are allowed to enter the Netherlands;
- both newcomers and oldcomers are obliged by law to undergo civic integration in Dutch society;
- the obligation to undergo civic integration lies with the migrants themselves, both financially and in terms of content. This also implies that they are free to select the package that will help them fulfill their civic integration obligations;
- the obligation to undergo civic integration is fulfilled only when all the components of the examination on this issue have been passed.

In the revised version of the Civic Integration Regulations of 2004, newcomers to the Netherlands emerge as constituting the main cause for concern. What is new in the 2004 document is the attention paid to the integration of oldcomers who had not sufficiently mastered the Dutch language and who were receiving unemployment benefits (see Pluymen, 2004, for a critique of the link made in these regulations between permanent residence status and social benefits). Oldcomers who had already been given a permanent residence permit or a Dutch passport were also invited—though not compelled—to participate in the integration track. To this group, consisting of some 85,000 “allochtonous” citizens (as they are referred to in the document), the following applied: They were to register for compulsory intake at the immigration office of the municipality of residence; they were to undergo a civic integration track to be financed by themselves; they were given a free choice from among existing civic integration programs and providers that were approved by the government, newcomers being given three and a half years to become integrated, oldcomers being granted five years. These changes eventually led to the introduction of the admission test, which is to be taken abroad, and to a revision of the civic integration exam, which has to be taken once one has arrived in the Netherlands. To establish the norms to be adhered to for these two exams, a committee was appointed in 2004 to advise the government on this issue. The committee, commonly known as the *Commissie Franssen* (the Franssen Committee), named after its chairman, gave its first advisory opinion in 2004. On the basis of criteria such as functionality, feasibility, selection of previous educational tracks, and motivation, the committee came to the conclusion that



proficiency in written Dutch language skills should not be examined while proficiency for oral skills should be fixed below the lowest level of the CEFR. This level was subsequently classified as A1– (see Adviescommissie Inburgeringsnormen, 2004). The committee also advised the government not to test knowledge of Dutch society because of a low level of knowledge of the Dutch language and to instead run a compulsory course providing an “introduction to life in the Netherlands.” This final recommendation was not taken on by the government, and the admission test includes a component on knowledge of Dutch society (IND, 2005).

The Law on Integration Abroad (*Wet Inburgering Buitenland*) was introduced in March 2006 (WIB, 2006). Immigrants who want to enter the Netherlands of their own free will are to undergo an exam on spoken Dutch and an exam on knowledge of Dutch society before they are allowed into the country. With January 1, 2007 as the projected date of enforcement, then Minister of Integration Rita Verdonk proposed the last few changes to the Law on Civic Integration in June 2006 (*Wet Inburgering Nederland*). These changes, however, met with severe opposition from a majority in parliament, who rejected any unequal treatment of “native” and “naturalized” Dutch nationals. Verdonk’s appeal to parliament for “political courage” did not succeed, not even with her own party members in parliament, and led to a halving of the original target group numbers. Apart from these changes being rejected, many other amendments to the proposed law were passed, making it even more detailed and complex, and thus even more difficult to carry out in practice. In order to cope with the difficulties encountered, Verdonk in accordance with the wishes of a majority in parliament, decided to only partially introduce the new law in 2007, limiting it to newcomers without Dutch citizenship. In June 2006, the Dutch cabinet fell after its refusal to approve a general pardon for those asylum seekers without legal residence status who had entered the Netherlands before April 2001, in spite of the fact that a narrow majority in parliament was in favor of it. The center-left government that succeeded the cabinet in November 2006 approved this pardon as one of its first measures. On November 13, 2007, Ella Vogelaar—then minister of integration, housing, and communities—released a press statement that can be taken as tangible proof of a discourse shift to a more egalitarian climate within Dutch political discourse. Her declaration reads as follows:

The cabinet wants to put a stop to the increasing polarization in the Netherlands. . . . Integration can only succeed if both non-native and native citizens accept Dutch society as their society. They need to support the liberties, rights, and duties connected to the Dutch civic state. . . . The cabinet appeals to all citizens to participate actively in society on the basis of mutual acceptance and equality. (Vogelaar, 2007, author’s own translation)

Although it would appear to announce a change in the tone of the integration debate, the measures adopted in 2003 and 2004 for civic integration remained in force, resulting in a harsh testing regime. Applicants who do not manage to pass the admission exam are not allowed to enter the Netherlands. Those who did not pass the civic integration exam in the Netherlands did not get a permanent residence permit (in the case of newcomers) or could not apply for citizenship (in the



case of oldcomers). After 2007, other complementary measures followed, particularly measures dealing with the actual implementation and the costs of the civic integration track, and there was a shift from the costs being partly subsidized through loans from the municipality to the costs being solely the responsibility of the immigrants. In the most recent government resolution, we read:

It can be expected from anyone coming to reside in the Netherlands that he or she abide by the rules that obtain here and that he or she actively participate in society by mastering the Dutch language, attending education, and taking part in the workforce. Qualifications are the key to successful participation and integration. (Gedoogakkoord, September 30, 2010, author's own translation)

The official agreement closed between the current Dutch minority government and the party pledging its support to this government to create a majority in parliament (provided the agreement is adhered to) stipulates the following measures:

Immigrants and asylum seekers are solely responsible for their own integration in our country. To those who lack the financial means to pay for these purposes, the cabinet offers the possibility of loaning money, which implies that the money loaned will have to be paid back. Ultimately, the resolution adopted by the cabinet implies that, barring exceptional circumstances, failure to pass the integration exam will result in withdrawal of the temporary residence permit. The cabinet further proposes to accept the bilateral agreement between the EU and Turkey, making the due changes to the regulation that inhabitants of Turkey fall within integration regulations. (Gedoogakkoord, September 30, 2010, author's own translation)

The coalition agreement entitled “Vrijheid en verantwoordelijkheid” (“Freedom and Responsibility”) stresses once more that immigrants who want to reside in the Netherlands have to follow the rules spelled out for civic integration and participate actively in the fields of education and work. In relation to the civic integration exams, the agreement states that: “The examination requirements are made stricter . . . there is the projected use of a test which makes it possible to determine whether loyalty to the Netherlands is deeper than loyalty to any other country” (Regeerakkoord, 2010, p. 23, author's own translation).

Since April 2011, the changes made to the Law on Integration Abroad have been put into practice. Since this date, the norms for the oral exam abroad have been raised from A1– to A1 and immigrants have to take a test in literacy and reading comprehension, scoring at least level A1–. On June 17, 2011 the cabinet approved another series of amendments, including the following: civic integration applicants pay for their own costs with the possibility of taking out a loan for those with insufficient financial means, and the examination must be passed within three years. The language proficiency level to be attained remains at CEFR level A2 minimum for newcomers. Also, the level for knowledge of Dutch society remains unchanged even though the exam now consists of a central part and an ancillary part. In the meantime, the level proposed for naturalization is CEFR level B1 (the level equivalent to that required for the State Examination Dutch, Program 1). The Netherlands has been the first country to introduce an examination for

Dutch language to be taken in the applicants' country of origin and the first to grant someone entry into the country on the basis of a computerized test administered over the telephone. The admission test puts applicants under considerable financial strain, if only because in most places there is no Dutch embassy nearby where the test can be taken, and in addition working with a DVD and a computer requires a certain level of technical skill. But above all, the exam on knowledge of Dutch society—which really is a language test cloaked as a civic knowledge test—requires potential migrants to make the norms and values of mainstream Dutch society their own. Clearly, these tests do not improve and reduce the time required for applicants' integration, but instead underscore the huge possible gaps between applicants in terms of literacy, language skills, computer skills, and socioeconomic background. Effectively, this means that doors remain open only for those applicants who fall within the category of literate, financially self-supporting, technically skilled people who can prepare for the exam and who have a high employability rate once they have entered the Netherlands. The exam on civic integration in foreign countries thus imposes an implicit hierarchization on the immigrant population in terms of who is considered suitable for entering the Netherlands. Table 23.1 presents a schematic overview of the historical developments that have taken place in the civic integration regulations from 1998 to 2011.

What is worth pointing out is that as of April 1, 2011 a new assessment component has been included in the civic integration exam, which is the literacy and reading comprehension exam. In order to pass this part of the integration exam, the examinee has to be able to read in Dutch (in the Latin alphabet) at CEFR level A1. This exam consists of five different tasks: (a) reading words out loud, (b) reading sentences out loud, (c) reading parts of texts out loud, (d) completing incomplete sentences, and (e) answering questions related to a short text. The answers to the other two parts of the examination are to be spoken into a telephone receiver. These answers are subsequently analyzed by a speech recognition program that assigns a score to each answer. The whole civic integration exam costs €350. Applicants can take the test as many times as they wish within the time allotted for reaching a pass level in all of the components. Each time they take the test, however, they will have to pay €350. Only when applicants have passed all three parts of the integration exam will they be given permission to apply for a visa to enter the Netherlands and, with that, a temporary residence permit.

## **Challenges and Future Directions**

Prior to the fall of the Berlin wall, migrant groups were fairly easy to circumscribe. Such groups often became recognizable sedentary “ethnic” communities in their own right in the host country. In the aftermath of the political events that took place in 1989 and 1990, a new pattern of migration emerged that has changed the face of European urban conglomerates, many of them now showing a widely diverse influx among their populations originating from Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The motives for and the forms of migration have also changed. Immigrants no longer enter merely as unskilled labor forces.

**Table 23.1** Overview of civic integration regulations from 1998 to 2011

<i>Year</i>	<i>Resolution</i>	<i>Applying to</i>	<i>Requirements</i>	<i>Consequences</i>
<b>1998</b>	WIN (Law on Integration of Newcomers)	Newcomers	Attend a course for Dutch as a second language Compulsory participation—take exam as proof of participation, but there is no obligation to pass	None
<b>2003/2004</b>	Hoofdlijnenakkoord/ Contourennota (Main Contours Agreement)			
<b>2006</b>	WIB (Law on Integration Abroad)	Newcomers	Take test on TGN (spoken Dutch) Take test on KNS (knowledge of Dutch society) Obligation to pass	MVV (provisional permission to stay)
<b>2007</b>	WI (Law on Civic Integration)	Newcomers and a specific group of oldcomers	Main part of the test: test on spoken Dutch digital practice exam exam on knowledge of Dutch society Part of the test centered on real-life situations: Portfolio and/or assessments Newcomers to complete this part within 3.5 years, oldcomers within 5 years Higher pass norms for test on spoken Dutch Addition of GBL test (literacy and reading comprehension) Pass within 3 years Sanctions have been made heavier	Residence permit with the possibility of naturalization
<b>2011</b>	Changes made in the WIB	Newcomers		
<b>Adopted resolution</b>	Changes to the integration benchmarking Proposals for changes to the integration benchmarking and its examination	Newcomers and oldcomers		
<b>Proposal</b>	Changes to the naturalization benchmarking		Pass level raised from A2 to B1	

They include refugees, short-time migrants, transitory migrants, highly educated foreign employees, visiting foreign students, and workers commuting from one nation to another. The blending of “old” and “new” migration has brought about a new, what might be called postmodern, form of diversity, one for which the term “super-diversity” has been coined (Vertovec, 2006). This type of diversity is diversity of a more complex kind in that the ethnic origin of people, their motives for migration, their “careers” as migrants (sedentary vs. short term and transitory), and their sociocultural and sociolinguistic biographies cannot be presupposed (see Maryns and Blommaert, 2006; Blommaert, 2010; Spotti, 2011b).

This new migratory wave is confronting the popular conceptions of “immigrants” with new challenges: the challenge of grasping who an immigrant actually is as well as the challenge of grasping their administrative position. As a result of all this, critical questions need to be raised with regard to the rationale and future of nation-states in Westernized Europe, about the dynamics of their dense and fast-moving urban spaces, about the embedded but as yet still omnipresent supremacy of the perspective of the majority within the institutions that regulate the entrance of migrants, and about the capacity of the bureaucracies of nation-states to handle them. As a response, politicians—regardless of their political affiliations—are pushed to think about and enforce modernist measures that allow access to the nation-state territory, a process in which the national language and the knowledge of mainstream cultural norms and values play a critical role (see Extra, Spotti, & Van Avermaet, 2009; Mar-Molinero, Stevenson, & Hogan-Brun, 2009). The Netherlands is no exception in this regard. Both the granting of access and the civic integration of new and old immigrants are processes deeply entrenched in a rigid set of modernist measures regulated by ideologies of fitting within a certain canon of language as well as cultural behavior. In other words, from the very beginning of a person’s immigration track, the Dutch state machinery requires the would-be resident to comply with an ideology of linguistic homogenization sold as a prerequisite for active societal participation, starting from the principle that, if all noses point in the same direction (i.e., if we all speak Dutch and we are led by a common set of cultural norms and values), then maintenance of national order is guaranteed. There is very little point in rebelling against the modernist measures proposed by the nation-state machinery. This chapter aims to lay bare some of the paradoxes involved in granting citizenship to immigrants through language testing and testing cultural knowledge of the host country.

Testing “newcomers” and “oldcomers” on language and culture has become the localized reaction through which national realities respond to the supranational socioeconomic processes of globalization (see Blommaert, 2008, for evidence on how modernist ideologies play an important role in asylum-seeking procedures). In this process, CEFR levels play a key role. While these levels were initially intended as a tool to assess/measure multilingualism—and here we need to ask ourselves what kind of multilingualism is being measured and for the benefit of whom—they have now been turned into a powerful modernist tool to measure linguistic homogenization. They focus more on what newcomers and oldcomers lack in mainstream society than on what they might be able to contribute and add in terms of linguistic resources. Furthermore, through the testing

enterprise, the official language as well as the cultural norms and values of the majority have narrowed the desirable linguistic and cultural package to a *civic doxa* of (national) homogenization (Bourdieu, 1991). Although both newly arrived immigrants and long term residents bring along and might have already developed perfectly valuable linguistic and cultural resources by themselves, these resources do not symbolically qualify as valid skills—whether linguistic, cultural, or both—because they do not fit in the Herderian equation of nation, language, and territory. Not only does this imply a disqualification of the immigrant's own resources, it also implies huge financial constraints, to be made even sharper from 2014 onwards, which are imposed on both physical access to the country of residence and actual participation in the tests, not to mention the sanctions implicit in failing them.

SEE ALSO: Chapter 22, Language Testing for Immigration to Europe; Chapter 93, The Influence of Ethics in Language Assessment

## References

- Adviescommissie Inburgeringsnormen. (2004). *Inburgering Getoetst: Advies over het Niveau van het Inburgeringsexamen in het Buitenland*. The Hague, Netherlands: Ministerie voor Vreemdelingenzaken en Integratie.
- Anderson, B. (1991). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London, England: Verso.
- Bauman, R., & Briggs, C. (2003). *Voices of modernity*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Block, D. (2006). *Multilingual identities in a global city: London stories*. London, England: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Blommaert, J. (2008, April). *Language, asylum, and the national order*. Paper presented as a plenary lecture at the annual meeting of the American Association of Applied Linguistics (AAAL), Washington, DC.
- Blommaert, J. (2010). *The sociolinguistics of globalization*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power*. Cambridge, England: Polity.
- Council of Europe (2001). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press/Author.
- De Heer, J. C. (2004). The concept of integration in converging Dutch minority and migration policies. In A. Böcker, B. de Hart, & I. Michalowski (Eds.), *Migration and the regulation of social integration* (Special issue). *IMIS-Beiträge*, 24, 177–88.
- Extra, G., Spotti, M., & Van Avermaet, P. (Eds.). (2009). *Language testing, migration and citizenship: Cross-national perspectives*. London, England: Continuum.
- Gedoogakkord. (2010). *Gedoogakkord*. Retrieved November 23, 2012 from <http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gedoogakkoord>
- Hoofddlijnenakkoord. (2003, May 16) *Meedoen meer werk minder regels: Hoofddlijnenakkoord voor het kabinet CDA VVD D66*. Retrieved November 22, 2012 from <http://www.parlement.com/9291000/d/regak03.pdf>
- IND (Immigratie en Naturalisatie Dienst). (2005). *De Naturalisatietoets: Op Weg naar het Nederlanderschap*. Rijswijk, Netherlands: Author.

- Kurvers, J., & Stockmann, W. (2009). *Alfabetisering nt2 in beeld: Leerlast en succesfactoren*. Tilburg, Netherlands: University of Tilburg.
- Mar-Molinero, C., Stevenson, P., & Hogan-Brun, G. (Eds.). (2009). *Testing regimes: Critical perspectives on language, migration and citizenship in Europe*. Amsterdam, Netherlands: John Benjamins.
- Maryns, K., & Blommaert, J. (2006). Conducting dissonance: Codeswitching and differential access to context in the Belgian asylum process. In C. Mar-Molinero & P. Stevenson (Eds.), *Language ideologies, policies and practices: Language and the future of Europe* (pp. 177–90). Basingstoke, England: Palgrave Macmillan.
- McNamara, T., & Shohamy, E. (2008). Language tests and human rights. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 18(1), 89–95.
- Pluymen, M. (2004). Exclusion from social benefits as an instrument of migration policy in the Netherlands. In A. Böcker, B. de Hart, & I. Michalowski (Eds.), *Migration and the regulation of social integration* (Special issue). *IMIS-Beiträge*, 24, 75–85.
- Regeerakkoord. (2010, September 30). *Vrijheid en verantwoordelijkheid: Concept Regeerakkoord VVD-CDA*. Retrieved November 22, 2012 from <http://www.parlement.com/9291000/d/pdfs/regeer2010.pdf>
- RRIN (1996). *Rijksregeling Inburgering Nieuwkomers*. The Hague.
- Spotti, M. (2011a). Ideologies of success for superdiverse citizens: The Dutch testing regime for integration and the online private sector. *Diversities*, 13(2), 39–52.
- Spotti, M. (2011b). Modernist language ideologies, indexicalities and identities: Looking at the multilingual classroom through a post-Fishmanian lens. *Applied Linguistics Review*, 2(2), 29–50.
- Van den Tillart, H., Olde Monninkhof, M., van den Berg, S., & Warmerdam, J. (2000). *Nieuwe etnische groepen in Nederland: Een onderzoek onder vluchtelingen en statushouders uit Afghanistan, Ethiopië en Eritrea, Iran, Somalië en Vietnam*. Ubbergen, Netherlands: Tandem Felix.
- Verdonk, M. C. F. (2004a April 23). *Contourennota herziening van het inburgeringsstelsel*. The Hague, Netherlands.
- Verdonk, M. C. F. (2004b). *Herziening van het inburgeringsstelsel* (Report to the Dutch Parliament on December 7).
- Verdonk, M. C. F. (2005). *Brief aan de Tweede Kamer* (TK 29700, no. 26 & 33).
- Vertovec, S. (2006). *The emergence of super-diversity in Britain* (COMPAS WP-06-25). Oxford, England: Centre on Migration Policy and Society.
- Vogelaar, E. (2007). *Deltaplan inburgering: Vaste voet in Nederland*. Rijswijk, Netherlands: Ministerie VROM/Wonen, Wijken en Integratie.
- WIB (Wet Inburgering in het Buitenland). (2006). *Staatsblad* (2006-28). The Hague, Netherlands: SDU Uitgeverij.
- WIN (Wet Inburgering Nieuwkomers). (1998). *Staatsblad* (1998-261). The Hague, Netherlands: SDU Uitgeverij.
- WRR (Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid). (1989). *Allochtonenbeleid*. The Hague, Netherlands: SDU Uitgeverij.

## Suggested Readings

- Jacquement, M. (2005). Transidiomatic practices: Language and power in the age of globalization. *Language and Communication*, 25(3), 257–77.
- Leung, C., & Lewkowicz, J. (2006). Expanding horizons and unresolved conundrums: Language testing and assessment. *TESOL Quarterly*, 40, 211–34.



- Peters, R., & Vellenga, S. (2007). Contested tolerance: Public discourse in the Netherlands on Muslim migrants. *Soziale Velt Sonderband*, 17(1), 221–40.
- Thompson, J. (1984). *Studies in the theory of ideology*. Cambridge, England: Polity.
- van Oers, R. (2008). From liberal to restrictive citizenship policies: The case of the Netherlands. *Diversities*, 10(1), 40–59.

### Online Resource

- Naar Nederland. (n.d.). *Home page*. Retrieved November 22, 2012 from <http://www.naarnederland.nl/bestellen>